

Invisible Inkling

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Summary: Master Chief, John117 has recieved Cassandra's letter and plans to make his way to her. Romance may well be on the cards for the two Spartans, if they can figure out just what love is.

1. Chapter 1

_Obviously some degree of creative licensing here with the character of Cassandra, as little is known about her. This takes place after Halo 1 and I'll try to keep it in with the canon, so reviews accepted if I need correcting!
(Romance/Action/Drama)**_**

****Invisible Inkling****

"_117 _

_As you might imagine - though I know you won't - I've heard quite a bit of your recent adventures on the __Halo__. I'm glad you made it; I have to assume you always will. Recovery is going well and I am proceeding on to fourth-stage rehabilitation. It is significantly more painful than previous stages, but I'm happy to be skinned once again. _

_I hear that you will be testing the new Mark VI. I will definitely look for the reports on how it works out. The specs are obviously improved, but the choice to incorporate further __Covenant__ technology somehow makes my skin crawl. _

_We miss you, John. I've asked __Sergeant Johnson__ to let me know if you're ever near the M25L Recovery Station and perhaps I'll be able to come see you. I'm hoping I'll have the chance soon. Today, humanity feels pale and thin with only ghosts to defend her heart. I feel much the same. _

_I'll write again. _

Cassandra "

Spartan 117's eyes flickered over the note, a smile twitching the corner of his lips as he thought fondly of Cassandra, once his comrade, now onto the road to recovery. On re-reading the last paragraph, his brow furrowed, discontent marring his essentially ruggedly handsome face.

"...humanity feels pale and thin with only ghosts to defend her heart."

It was troublesome to read. Spartans had never been known for their sharp wit and emotions, but the extract seemed to differ. A Spartan that could feel...

John shook his head and placed the letter face down on his quarters desk and stared at it. Spartans had dulled emotions, the military expected that. Cassandra was obviously undergoing stress from her treatment. He would have to visit her, remind her of the Spartan and Mjolnir way, refresh her senses and remove her from a pit of despair.

Sitting in her sparsely decorated recovery room, Cassandra's thoughts drifted back to her old training days. John had never been particularly fast nor strong, but was balanced, and exceedingly lucky, sometimes scarily so. His leadership skills had strengthened, and his recent victories did little to contradict this.

She stretched her arms in front of her, her once muscular forearms weakened through drug intake and rest. She was looking a little more feminine now, and it was hard to take in. Soft flesh had replaced stacked up muscles, and she knew she would have to train again to resume her once glorious form. The doctors had made it known to her that the road back to being a Spartan would be a dubiously hard one, but she hadn't listened. Hardship was the life of a Spartan, and she knew one day she would help John defeat the Covenant.

She lifted herself up with her forearms resting on the bed. Her legs were weak from the treatment and she would have to get used to walking all over again. She stood tall for human female, 5ft 11 inches. Her hair was cropped short, brunette, with a side fringe neatly but averting her cerulean right eye.

She gazed into the mirror that lay across from the bed and smirked in a childish manner. All of this time out of her Mjolnir armour, and she'd changed so much. She wondered what John must look like, battle hardened, scarred, pale. She thought about him frequently so, dreaming of him. Voices recurring in her sleep of childish games they had played in the power struggle that had been their first week in the camps.

His reluctance at first had cost dinners for his team. Now Cassandra only wanted to see who that proud boy was now. His quick succession through the ranks suggested otherwise, but there was something in that young boy, perhaps just the pure connection to the past, that made her sad. She hoped he would see her swiftly, that the letter had even reached him... But the UNSC postal service was in complete dissaray with Covenant forces attacking in sheer randomness.

2. Chapter 2

"So what is you're doing exactly?"

The lithe form of Cortana flickered in the background as John packed a black bag full of standardised military recreational wear.

"I'm taking a detour."

Cortana flicked her hair in a flippant manner. "And I'm not coming? You really know how to make a girl feel special..."

John continued to pack his case and looked over his shoulder at her in a quizzical fashion. He snorted and zipped up his case and walked over to the datacube that held Cortana's key information.

"If you really want to come, you'll have to lie low. UNSC won't take kindly to my carting round computer programmes."

The feminine figure of programme put her hands on her hips, an angry stance that matched her tone as she spoke.

"You're going to regret calling me that one day Spartan..."

"Patient 0832 is in the recovery bay, just down the corridor there, and then turn left at the end."

The nurse that greeted John was British, a rarity in the UNSC these days. He'd seen lots of different cultures in the Marines, Mexican, Australian, American- never really many British members. He presumed they were too honed in on the bureaucracy side of the military, helping the slick oiled machine defeat the Covenant with as little fuss as was possible. It only occurred to him as an afterthought of meeting the nurse, how without his Mjolnir armour, he still towered over the majority of humans. He was thankful that Cassandra were a Spartan too, it was that similarity that had kept their friendship solid, even through letters.

He walked down the gleaming hallways, immaculate and shining. Someone here was obviously dedicated to the cleaning aspect of these halls, and in a strange way, John admired this person. It was the same sort of showing dedication that John put into his own career, never missing a spot, never quitting until the job was finished, no matter how long the hours.

He turned left at the end, and at arrived another corridor, greeted by an electronic noticeboard pixelated with text of patient names and numbers. Cassandra was in room 1F. That was a bit further down this particular corridor, and John couldn't quite brace himself for her reaction to his unmentioned arrival.

He knocked on the door and waited silently for her answer.

"Come in."

Her voice was loud and healthy, John secretly let out a small sigh, thanking the stars that she were healthy and proceeded to open the door gently.

Cassandra looked up to the door as it opened slowly and wondered who it could be. Doctors always tended to open doors swfitly, as if it were their own home and they were checking on a piece of furniture for wood rot. This was no doctor, that she was sure of.

"John?"

Her voice came out a little more apprehensive than she would have liked, but she smiled broadly nonetheless.

"I've often been called that. How are you?"

She nodded, her gaze wandering into the distance as she thought of the past months she had been locked in this very room.

"I've coped. Your victory, I heard it earned you a well deserved medal, am I correct?"

It was now John's time to smile broadly, and it had been a long time since he had been put on the spot such as now.

"Nothing escapes your ears as ever."

She smiled at him, and reached out for his hand.

"You were always bad at lying. What's happened?"

His stern eyes focused on her hand, no longer muscle wired, but soft and comforting, so unlike a Spartans.

"So much has happened. Finding other Spartans when I thought all were dead... Your hospitalisation. Dr. Halsey... Even for me this is getting too much!"

She stroked his hand in an affectionate way, to John it felt odd, he'd never really been comforted in his entire life. Cortana and he were playmates of sorts, when the going got tough, one or the other would crack a wise remark, dripping in sarcasm. It was as if they were old friends, but this affection that Cassandra showed him, it was different. It wasn't right, but he did nothing to stop it. It felt right. That was all that mattered.

"Life has been tough on everyone so far. Stick in there. You're a good warrior, you have a great team and you're respected. So you feel a little down? Everyone gets that. _Even_ Spartans."

He laughed at her last remark, reminded of every time he had used being a Spartan as an excuse for his somewhat derogatory remarks towards the rest of the human species. He'd always thought of Spartans as being above relationships that humans went through, but now, in this room with Cassandra, he was beginning to feel different about what he had long since joked about.

"Your letter. You sounded..."

He was out of depth, he knew this. He realised he'd never fully understand Cassandra's letter, but he wanted to. He wanted to understand her, to know what had pained her so much that she felt life were losing its grip.

"You don't need to know everything John" she said, matter of factly. "Some things end up sounding worse on paper. This was one of those things."

He looked her in the eyes. Blue and round, they quivered slightly, making her look vulnerable, appealing to his masculinity.

"It was more than one of those things."

She looked away from his scrutinising gaze and looked into her lap for solace.

"I wish I could make you understand John, but I can't. So instead..."

She kissed him, grabbing his head in her hands, pulling him to her. He didn't resist. The sensation was overwhelming and he liked it. He in turn pulled her to him, wrapping his arms around her waist before she pulled away suddenly.

"Now I guess you know why I wanted you here so suddenly."

There wasn't a lot to say, he just silently cursed his male ignorance for not reading the signs in her letters.

**Thankyou all for reviewing so quickly! It was such a lovely thing to wake up to, so I made sure I had this up today for you all!
**

D

I'm off to University tomorrow, so for the first week I may be a little... Preoccupied, if you get me!

As for the British thing? If you have a problem with it, I'm British. So don't get narked!

P

Rhi

3. Chapter 3

Everything had gone so wrong since that last sweet kiss, Cassandra mused. John had done his utmost best to ignore the situation, and treated her with a cool reserve as he had left the room, the face and attitude he so often favoured. She winced slightly, it hadn't happened that way inside her head. She shouldn't have been so brash, so human. She was a Spartan, and Spartans did not act so rashly nor so emotionally driven.

She pulled herself out of her bed, her bedclothes sticking slightly to her back. There was a message on her invoice machine- John had messaged her to tell her he was due within the hour. Not the first thing she had exactly wanted to hear, but not entirely the last either. She would have to switch her mind to battle mode, tactical precision and diplomacy was called for, not the rashness of the human mind. She needed to be prepared, and her first task of the day was to change into civilian clothes. Hospital bed clothes made her seem vulnerable, and this was not an image she wished to pursue.

"You know, war can do things to people, make them change."

The blue form of Cortana flickered on an unstable computer terminal. Codes ran up and down her entire form, and her eyes glowed a subtle purple as she rolled her eyes towards the hulking form of Spartan 117, Master Chief, John.

He didn't answer her statement with a justification, he sat there, brooding. Cortana turned her head slightly to the left, her face softening as she gazed onto what she perceived to be his unhappiness.

"You can tell people what is wrong, even you know that, Chief."

Master Chief rose his head slightly to look at Cortana and nodded his head in painful realisation.

"People change Cortana, but not that much."

Cortana sat down, her legs dangling over the computer terminals edge.

"Something happened in there, didn't it Chief?"

He didn't answer her, for a second time. Cortana didn't bother to probe him, whatever had happened in there, he wasn't likely to tell her. His Spartan ways and training had clammed him up to normal human emotions, and sometimes, when he felt a rare spark of humanity escaping him, he turned to stone, as if by acting as his normal self, he would soon resume normality.

This was happening more frequently as the war went on, and more men died.

"Cassandra."

The greeting wasn't affectionate, but then, it was hard to be affectionate to someone you had seen fight and survive, to someone who had changed so much since those years as a young Spartan.

"Master Chief."

He grimaced slightly, his top lip curling slightly in the left corner as he controlled his facial expressions. By calling him by his military title, he realised his relationship with Cassandra couldn't really go back to the way it had once been. He could just have been over analysing small points, but the kiss was hers, and hers alone. It had felt freeing, that much was true, but he was a Spartan. He was above such attachments, the medication to supremacy had said that much was true. Yet, he still felt a kinsmanship with Cassandra that he felt with no other being.

Spartans did not feel love.

It wasn't love. He knew that, he didn't really understand this emotion called love, it was a childish notion. People lived and died. You formed attachments to some, by way of give and take, but you never fully bonded with them, so far in that you couldn't breathe. It was detrimental to survival, there would be no human race left, and yet there was. In his head, the theories all worked soundly, and never failed him.

"You've adapted your tone slightly since our last meeting."

It was a cruel line to use, but he was hurt from her greeting, and it seemed a good defence would be a damaging offence. He looked at her stiffen slightly in this new civilian garb, she looked better now, healthier in normal clothing. Her cheekbones were taught in disgust at his mentioning of their kiss.

"The doctor should be able to explain that one to you, _Master Chief_. It's the medication. The skinning was sublimely painful."

She sneered at him, he had wounded her, and she had a few ideas why, but with men, nothing was a certainty. Even with Spartan men.

"I haven't had a chance to meet your doctor. Perhaps I should do so."

"Perhaps you should!"

She barked at him, her voice strong and bellowing, her eyes narrowing. He noticed her neck muscles also taut under the strain of anger. He had gone beyond the line, but he offence was working perfectly. He could either continue or stop and admit defeat. But Spartans never admitted defeat. It wasn't in their nature.

"You look well enough for me to assume you'll be flying high in the military once again."

Confused, she stepped closer to John, her mouth widening slightly into a perfect little "o".

It was true, she was hoping to contact Sergeant Johnson as soon as her treatment and rest period was over. She so longed to join the UNSC again, to shine in her own colours as she had done as a Spartan. Whereas before she wished of joining by his side, fighting together, now, after this conversation, she wished of nothing more than beating him at his own game, selfish and childish as it was.

"I was hoping to contact Sergeant Johnson when treatment was over,

that much is true."

John nodded his head, his steely eyes softening slightly when he looked back at her to speak.

"I can contact some friends. Get you reinstated where you belong."

It was meant as a gesture of kindness, a peace treaty to break the offensive nature and cold reserve he had treated her with since her overwhelm of emotion, but it didn't work out as it was planned.

"I'll work my way up again, thank you very much, Master Chief. I'm not being reinstated- how could you insinuate that I am not fit to work my way through the ranks? I'm a Spartan, and I won't be cheated, or cheat. That's the way it works. If you've only come here to offend me at will, then leave. Humanity is already looking thin, I don't need that point confirming."

John stood there, his hands clasped firmly behind his back. Cortana had been right, people do change, and perhaps it was he who had changed, not Cassandra. She was hurt, a mixture of his treatment towards her, physical injuries and development. This was all so wrong, she wasn't supposed to take offence at his gesture.

"I am sorry you felt that way. I meant it only through good will. I leave tomorrow for Cairo, with the UNSC. My stay was pleasant. Thank you."

He curtly nodded at the speechless Cassandra and left the room.

"Cairo."

She shook her head. The medals, he would presumably be picking them up from the Cairo station. He hadn't meant the things he had said, the sadness in his voice as he had left had told her that much. She had been an idiot. She had started the mess, and he had worsened it, that was true. But she would be the one to fix it. It was too soon to say so now, tomorrow morning, or later tonight, that would be when she would tell him, and apologise.

It was all her own stupid fault.

"You OK, Chief?"

He was packing his large bag full of the civilian clothes he had brought with him, carefully laying them in standardised rows.

"I'm fine Cortana. I'm busy preparing."

She looked at him, jutting out her head slightly on a petite neck.

"I thought we weren't leaving until a few days later? The ceremony at Cairo doesn't start for 3 days."

John nodded and turned around to face her, answering simply, "It doesn't."

Cortana walked to the far edge of the computer terminal in order to assess John closely, the way he packed, and for the answer why.

"I arranged for the UNSC to pick me up tomorrow morning. It'll be easier."

Cortana sighed and folded her arms. Men, even Spartans, could be somewhat predictable, yet in her entire time of knowing the Master Chief, she had never seen him act so rashly, so boldly, so in love and wounded by the nature of it.

"This is about Cassandra, isn't it? This whole thing?"

Yes well, hope this chapter suffices! I'm sorry it was quite late, but Uni beckoned!

~DanceBoheme

4. Chapter 4

"Whether or not this matter is about an old workmate really has nothing to do with you."

Cortana let out a laugh as she swung her legs to dangle over the computer terminal. Sometimes she found Spartan-117 far too infuriating. He was like a brother to her, and yet, he still seemed to find it hard to open up to what was essentially a part of him.

"You know, all this repression isn't going to work wonders on your stomach Chief..."

He looked up at her quizzically from the neatly folded clothes laid out on his bed. Cortana rolled her purple flashing eyes.

"Stomach ulcers. You humans are prone to getting them through stress. Remarkable creatures, you can actually dispose of yourself by being repressed. I don't know any other animal capable of doing so."

John ignored her, placing his military gear into his small bag, then proceeded to walk into the bathroom to pick up the few essential bits of kit he had felt was necessary to bring. Cortana took this cue of silence as meaning she could continue.

"You know I'm right. Talk to me Chief. We go way back, you know I'm part of you. I'm a girl; a computer generated one at that. This therefore renders my problem solving capabilities to being immense..."

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It wasn't fair. Not only had John insulted her intelligence by

attempting to reinstate her, she had thoroughly embarrassed herself through a childish and somewhat human fuelled kiss. She was a Spartan. Spartan's didn't kiss, and they certainly never showed emotion.

She blamed the psychotherapy administered to her as she was re-skinned.

It was the only explanation. A cocktail of painkillers, and hourly visits from a therapist were bound to wreak havoc on a usually composed mind. Even a composed Spartan mind.

Cairo space station though, his awards ceremony. Surely she could get to him before he left? She had to explain the agony her mind was going through. The human wanting and emotions that had flooded her brain whilst her Spartan barriers had been tamed by the flooding of drugs upon her.

It was all so wrong; she had always quietly observed and admired Spartan-117, her friend, John. Feelings that she had felt in that room had never overwhelmed her like they had at that crucial moment whereby she had expressed the long felt agonies in her heart. It was wrong, all wrong. John was a friend, a superior now. To express such love was wrong by all accounts of the military code, and especially the Spartan code.

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"So, you had a breakdown of Spartan ways? That's all?"

John nodded solemnly, his gaze averted from Cortana completely.

"But Chief, that's to be expected at some stage. You're a Spartan, and a very good one at that, but underneath all of that, your base genetic code is still that of a human. Humans feel odd emotions; sometimes even I think I feel something... It happens to everyone Chief, not just yourself."

Zippering his bag up, Spartan-117 finally felt ready to face his companion.

"It was the drugs. She's just gone through a painful re-skinning. I'm a Spartan. I did nothing wrong, I was just there."

Cortana snorted. She found herself to be doing it more frequently these days than ever.

"Ha! Men. You're all the same, aren't you? Even the noble Spartans..."

John sat down and sighed as he waited for a berating argument with his computer programme familiar.

"She did nothing wrong Chief, other than show you how she felt. So you don't exactly feel the same way, so what? She'll get over it as soon as she becomes her Spartan self again."

John's eyes widened. Cortana had in a roundabout way agreed that Cassandra had not been acting herself in that moment of released passion he had shared with her. The only real problem that still

stood was that he had reacted to that moment, and had found himself almost enjoying the comfortable atmosphere, a new closeness with an old friend. That was what was wrong here, himself.

"Does this have more to do with yourself, Chief?"

Cortana rested her hand between her almost transparent hands of data code. John shook his head.

"No. Not at all."

She smiled, John was so self assured about his Spartan self, but she was right, she knew she was. And the inkling she had that he did feel something for Cassandra wouldn't go away. Sometimes, she praised her feminine mind and computer soul.

"Yah-uh." She mock yawned. "Well Chief, a girl can only do so much you know. I think you should go see her... But then, when have you have ever listened to anyone else?"

She winked at him, hand on hip and left the data table as a stream of flickering blue lights. John sat staring at the empty table. Should he go? Or would he stay? He wasn't sure, but it couldn't hurt to at least talk to Cassandra's doctor. Things would be better once this was all forgotten, that he was sure of.

End
file.